

## The Commoner.

### Memorial Day Address.

Delivered by Mr. Bryan at Arlington Cemetery, near Washington, D. C., May 30, 1894. It is reproduced at this time because it presents the editor's views on the subjects considered on decoration day and also because it contains a recommendation that Lincoln's Gettysburg speech be read as part of the program each year—a recommendation which has since been followed in many places

With flowers in our hands and sadness in our hearts we stand amid the tombs where the nation's dead are sleeping. It is appropriate that the chief executive is here, accompanied by his cabinet; it is appropriate that the soldier's widow is here, and the soldier's son; it is appropriate that here are assembled, in numbers growing less each year, the scarred survivors, federal and confederate, of our last great war; it is appropriate, also, that these exercises in honor of comrades dead should be conducted by comrades still surviving. All too soon the day will come when these graves must be decorated by hands unused to implements of war, and when these speeches must be made by lips that never answered to a roll call.

We, who are of the aftermath, cannot look upon the flag with the same emotions that thrill you who have followed it as your pillar of cloud by day and your pillar of fire by night, nor can we appreciate it as you can who have seen it waving in front of reinforcements when succor meant escape from death; neither can we, standing by these blossom-covered mounds, feel as you have often felt when far away from home and on hostile soil you have laid your companions to rest; but from a new generation we can bring you the welcome assurance that the commemoration of this day will not depart with you. We may neglect the places where the nation's greatest victories have been won, but we cannot forget the Arlington which the nation has consecrated with its tears.

To ourselves as well as to our dead we owe the duty which we discharge here, for monuments and memorial days declare the patriotism of the living no less than the virtues of those whom they commemorate.

We would be blind, indeed, to our own interests and to the welfare of posterity if we were deaf to the just demands of the soldier and his dependents. We are grateful for the services rendered by our defenders, whether illustrious or nameless, and yet a nation's gratitude is not entirely selfish, since by our regard for the dead we add to the security of the living; by our remembrance of those who have suffered we give inspiration to those upon whose valor we must hereafter rely, and prove ourselves worthy of the sacrifices which have been made and which may be again required.

The essence of patriotism lies in a willingness to sacrifice for one's country, just as true greatness finds expression, not in blessings enjoyed, but in good bestowed. Read the words inscribed on the monuments reared by loving hands to the heroes of the past; they do not speak of wealth inherited, or honors bought or of hours in leisure spent, but of service done. Twenty years, forty years, a life or life's most precious blood he yielded up for the welfare of his fellows—this is the simple story which proves that it is now, and ever has been, more blessed to give than to receive.

The officer was a patriot when he gave his ability to this country and risked his name and fame upon the fortunes of war; the private soldier was a patriot when he took his place in the ranks and offered his body as a bulwark to protect the flag; the wife was a patriot when she bade her husband farewell and gathered about her the little brood over which she must exercise both a mother's and a father's care; and, if there can be degrees in patriotism, the mother stood first among the patriots

when she gave to the nation her boys, the divinely appointed strength of her declining years, and as she brushed the tears away thanked God that He had given her the strength to rear strong and courageous sons for the battlefield.

To us who were born too late to prove upon the battlefield our courage and our loyalty it is gratifying to know that opportunity will not be wanting to show our love of country. In a nation like ours, where the government is founded upon the principle of equality and derives its just powers from the consent of the governed; in a land like ours, I say, where every citizen is a sovereign and where no one cares to wear a crown, every year presents a battlefield and every day brings forth occasion for the display of patriotism.

And on this Memorial day we shall fall short of our duty if we content ourselves with praising the dead or complimenting the living and fail to make preparation for those responsibilities which present times and present conditions impose upon us. We can find instruction in that incomparable address delivered by Abraham Lincoln on the battlefield of Gettysburg. It should be read as a part of the exercises of this day on each returning year as the Declaration of Independence is read on the Fourth of July. Let me quote from it, for its truths, like all truths, are applicable in all times and climes:

"We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it cannot forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced."

"The Unfinished Work!" Yes, every generation leaves to its successor an unfinished work. The work of society, the work of human progress, the work of civilization is never completed. We build upon the foundation which we find already laid, and those who follow us take up the work where we leave off. Those who fought and fell 30 years ago did nobly advance the work in their day, for they led the nation up to a higher ground. Theirs was the greatest triumph in all history. Other armies have been inspired by love of conquest or have fought to repel a foreign enemy, but our armies held within the union brethren who now rejoice at their own defeat and glory in the preservation of the nation which they once sought to dismember. No greater victory can be won by citizens or soldiers than to transform temporary foes into permanent friends. But let me quote again:

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us: that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

Aye, let us here dedicate ourselves anew to this unfinished work which requires of each generation constant sacrifice and unceasing care. Aricles, in a funeral oration, explained the loyalty of his countrymen when he said:

"It was for such a country, then, that these men, nobly resolved not to have it taken from them, fell fighting and every one of their survivors may well be willing to suffer in its behalf."

The strength of a nation does not lie in forts, nor in navies, nor yet in great standing armies, but in happy and contented citizens, who are ever

ready to protect for themselves and to preserve for posterity the blessings which they enjoy. It is for us of this generation to so perform the duties of citizenship that a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

### The Man With the Musket.

BY H. S. TAYLOR.

They are building as Babel was built, to the sky,  
With a clash and confusion of speech;  
They are piling up monuments massive and high  
To lift a few names out of reach—  
As if haughty Jove, in a whimsy of fate,  
Had juggled the metal and stone  
And laid all the honors of Field and of State  
On a favorite few of his own!

But I—I will pass from this rage of renown,  
This ant-hill, commotion and strife,  
Pass by where the marbles and bronzes look down  
With their fast frozen gestures of life,  
On, out to the nameless who lie 'neath the gloom  
Of the pitying cypress and pine:  
Your man is the man of the sword and the plume,  
But the man with the musket is mine!

I knew him! By all that is noble, I knew  
This commonplace hero I name!  
I've camped with him, marched with him, fought  
With him, too,  
In the swirl of the fierce battle-flame!  
Laughed with him, cried with him, taken a part  
Of his canteen and blanket, and known  
That the throb of this chivalrous prairie boy's  
heart  
Was an answering stroke of my own!

I knew him, I tell you! And, also, I knew  
When he fell on the battle-swept ridge,  
That the poor mangled body that lay there in blue  
Was only a plank in the bridge  
Over which some should pass to a fame  
That shall shine while the high stars shall  
shine:  
Your hero is known by an echoing name,  
But the man with the musket is mine!

I knew him! All through him the good and the  
bad  
Ran together and equally free;  
But I judge as I trust Christ has judged the brave  
lad,  
For death made him noble to me!  
In the cyclone of war, in the battle's eclipse,  
Life shook out its lingering sands,  
And he died with the names that he loved on his  
lips,  
His musket still grasped in his hands!  
Up, close to the flag, my soldier went down,  
In the salient front of the line!  
You may take for your heroes the men of renown,  
But the man with the musket is mine!

There is peace in the May-laden grace of the hours  
That come when the day's work is done;  
And peace with the nameless who, under the  
flowers,  
Lie asleep in the slant of the sun.  
Beat the taps! Put out lights! and silence all  
sound!  
There is rifle-plot strength in the grave!  
They sleep well who sleep, be they crowned or un-  
crowned,  
For death will be kind to the brave!

Old comrades of mine, by the fast waning years  
That move to mortality's goal,  
By my heart full of love and my eyes full of tears,  
I hold you all fast in my soul!  
And I march with the May, and its blossomy  
charms  
I tenderly lay on this sod,  
And pray they may rest there, old comrades in  
arms,  
Like a kiss of forgiveness from God!